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ABSTRACT

This book aims to understand Virginia's rural past through a study of its schools. Rural Virginia schools of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were affected by at least three distinctly southern influences: the legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, regional underdevelopment and poverty, and the dilemma of racial coexistence in the postemancipation South. On the other hand, rural Virginia schools were also representative of rural America in that they were dominated by local communities. Even after the eventual victory of centralizing reformers, localism and the ability of Black and White communities to control their schools continued to shape the character of rural public education. Part 1 of this book focuses on localism and the rural school and discusses life in post-Reconstruction rural Virginia, the effects on schooling of geographic and social isolation, rural school governance through community compromise and consensus, teacher selection and characteristics, teaching conditions, choice of school location, racial segregation, school buildings and furnishings, factors affecting enrollment and attendance, textbooks and curriculum, and pedagogy. Part 2 examines the modernization of schools and discusses the urban roots of rural reform, civic group activism, the influence of missionaries and philanthropists, the vision of public education as a form of progressive governmental intervention, the advent of compulsory education and statewide bureaucracy, professionalization of teachers, school consolidation, student transportation, the school as public health center, changes in curriculum, agricultural education, rural extension, industrial education for Blacks, continuing racial inequality, the beginnings of Black high schools, and the Negro Organization Society. Appendices include 40 data tables. Contains references in notes, photographs, and an index. (SV)

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